HUEY P. LONG BRIDGE, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
5100 Jefferson Highway
Jefferson
Jefferson Parish
Louisiana

HAER LA-17-A
LA-17-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HUEY P. LONG BRIDGE, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

HAER No. LA-17-A

Location: 5100 Jefferson Highway, Jefferson, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana

USGS 1998 New Orleans West, LA (1:24,000 series)
NIMA 7943 INW-Series V885
UTM Location: (UTM Zone 15) Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates: N3316640 E772370

Date of Construction: Originally constructed in 1935

Architect: Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth, Architects

Builder: R.P. Farnsworth & Co., Inc., Contractors

Present Owner: The Public Belt Railroad Commission for the City of New Orleans

Present Use: Presently in use as an administration building for bridge maintenance and as a highway traffic police station.

Significance: The Huey P. Long Bridge, Administration Building was built as part of the Huey P. Long Bridge project and designated as Contract No. 10. It was built to house the administrative offices of the Louisiana Highway and New Orleans Public Belt Railroad Commissions and the control room for the bridge operations. The simple Modern/Beaux-Arts style building was designed by renowned Louisiana Architects; Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth of New Orleans who also designed the new nationally significant 1932 Modern/Beaux-Arts style Louisiana State Capitol Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Architects

Weiss, Dreyfous and Seiferth, Architects, was one of the most prominent architectural firms in Louisiana and New Orleans during the 1920s and 1930s. The firm was known for its tremendous output of work in and around Louisiana during the late-1920s and mid-1930s. Politically well connected with the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana political machines, specifically to the Governor Huey P. Long administration, they worked on approximately 400 commissions and received some of the state's most prestigious projects (National Register Staff, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation, 1982).

Prior to the construction of the Huey P. Long Bridge and the Administration Building in 1935, the firm had completed, in 1932, the "new" Louisiana State Capitol Building in Baton Rouge, perhaps their most notable work. In New Orleans, they had designed the Jung Hotel in 1925, and later the state run Charity Hospital, the Lakefront Airport and the Federal Land Bank building. Besides the state capitol building, they also designed the 1930s Governor's Mansion and many of the buildings on the campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Some of their work can also be found in Natchez, Mississippi (Kubly, 1977).

F. Julius Dreyfous received much of his architectural training at the University of Pennsylvania under Paul Cret, a prominent Paris-trained architectural academician. Cret promoted the style of architecture called "classic modern." The philosophy behind this style or thinking in architecture was to design buildings that would reflect the "times" but also adhering to the long traditions of classical style that used elements of timelessness thus keeping buildings from becoming dated (Kubly, 1977).

Leon C. Weiss and F. Julius Dreyfous formed an architectural partnership in 1919. Solis Seiferth joined the firm as chief draftsman and later became a partner in 1923. All three had received training from Tulane University in New Orleans as well. The three architects worked together up to the time of World War II. Leon Weiss died in 1946, but Dreyfous and Seiferth worked together until the firm was dissolved in 1960 (Kubly, 1977).

Initial Building Design

The design work of Weiss, Dreyfous, and Seiferth on the Huey P. Long Bridge Administration Building was part of the contract work for the entire bridge project funded by the State of Louisiana, the Public Belt Railroad Commission and the City of New Orleans. The Administration Building portion issued as Contract No. 10 was part of the total bridge project managed by Modjeski, Masters & Chase under their design contract. It is not certain exactly when Weiss, Dreyfous and Seiferth became actively involved with the project. The earliest document located in the files of the Public Belt Railroad offices involving the architects is an

August 8, 1934 letter from Leon Weiss requesting grade elevations of the site upon which the Administration Building was to be built (See Field Record Item No. 1). It is presumed that design work on the Administration Building and Out Buildings began sometime during the late summer and early fall of 1934 because the original construction documents were dated January 21, 1935.

On March 12, 1935, Frank Masters, in a letter to A. F. Barclay, General Manager of the Public Belt Railroad Commission, comments on the necessity to advertise for the construction of the Administration Building in order to meet the schedule of other work. He also comments on his understanding that attorneys were working on a formal architectural contract, a curious fact since the drawings had already been completed in January (See Field Record Item No. 2).

First Design

The first design conceived by the architects, consisted of a group of four buildings. The buildings included a 4,032 square feet Administration Building; a 1,480 square feet, 8-car Garage Building; a 420 square feet Locker Room Building and a 567 square feet Paint/Storage Building. The site selected for the administrative complex was on the southwest side of the east bank approach to the bridge at the Jefferson Highway traffic circle (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheets 7 and 9 of 13).

In the first design, the proposed 4,032 square feet Administration Building measured 96' wide and 42'-10" deep. The very symmetrical building plan included a formal Central Entry Hall, five Offices, six Toilet Rooms, a First Aid Room, a Storage Room, a Switchboard Room and a smaller transverse service Hallway and Passage (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheets 7 of 13).

The Administration Building was designed using very symmetrical proportions in both plan and elevation. The division of spaces in plan was practically mirrored on each side of the central Entrance Hall. The symmetrical formality of the plan clearly incorporated the elements of the Beau-Arts "modern classical" style of architecture commonly being built during this period in the country.

The front (northeast) elevation was set off by a central projected entry panel with double doors surrounded by curved and fluted stylized limestone work and topped by a flat limestone panel with the name of the building engraved into the stone. An architectural stylized relief band topped the central panel feature. Flanking the central panel feature, on each side, were two panels of three windows each that defined the location of the four interior offices. The rear (southwest) elevation is shown to be equally symmetrical in design having a single central doorway flanked on each side by regularly spaced windows and another set of single doors. The northwest elevation consisted of a central panel of three windows flanked by a single window opening equally spaced on each side. The southeast elevation consisted of three equally spaced panels of two windows each (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheets 7 and 8 of 13).

The building was to be constructed using an elevated reinforced concrete slab resting on square reinforced concrete footings and perimeter reinforced concrete grade beams. Reinforced footings ranged from 10' square to 13'-10" square and 16" deep and were supported by piles. 14" square vertical reinforced concrete columns, resting on the footings, supported the elevated reinforced concrete first floor and the reinforced concrete beam and flat slab roof system. The exterior perimeter walls were backed with a solid 8" brick wall and faced with 3 ½" and 4 ½" Indiana limestone. Interior walls were to be constructed of 3" hollow clay tile and faced with ¾" of plaster on each face (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheets 10 and 11 of 13).

Exterior doors specified were of hollow steel in steel frames. Windows specified were steel casement type opening out with hoppers. Typical interior room finishes included a mixture of terrazzo, rubber tile, ceramic tile and concrete for the floors; plaster for most of the walls; a 6'ceramic tile wainscot in the First Aid Room and the six Toilet Rooms; and a wood chair rail and picture mold in the Entrance Hall and the five Offices. Interior doors were of rotary cut solid wood with a veneer of red gum mounted onto a metal frame (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 7 of 13).

The 1,480 square feet, 8-car Garage Building, measuring 74'-8" x 20', consisted of 2-4 car compartments separated by a toilet room and heater room. The building was designed to be a solid brick structure with a low sloping flat type roof which extended out from the front a distance of 5' (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 9 of 13).

The 420 square feet Locker Room Building, measuring 21' x 20', consisted of two gang showers with three showers in each and two toilet rooms each with lockers, two lavatories, two toilets and a urinal. The building was designed to be a solid brick structure with a flat roof pitched to a single scupper and downspout. The northwest elevation was very symmetrical having a metal door with transom on each end with two evenly spaced metal framed casement windows with obscure glass in the middle. The northeast and southwest elevations show two high narrow horizontal windows on each face (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 9 of 13).

The 567 square foot Paint/Storage Building, measuring 33'- 4" x 17', consisted of one large open room with a 6' x 10'skylight at the rear center of the room. The building is shown to be a solid brick structure with a low sloped flat roof which projects out from the front at the entry door a distance of 5'. The front northeast elevation shows a brick façade broken by a lower central panel with a garage type door and higher panels on each end (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 9 of 13).

Initial Cost Estimates

Initial estimates for the first design projected that the cost of construction would be over double the funds budgeted for the project. A March 25, 1935 letter to Frank Masters from the architect outlines the projected cost of the Administration Building complex to be $86,205.49 (See Field Record Item No. 3). In a March 27, 1935 response to the architect's estimate, Frank Masters

clearly expresses his disappointment indicating that the funds available for the buildings were slightly over $35,000 and asked them to consider revising the plans to reduce the cost (See Field Record Item No. 4). He gave numerous suggestions as to where cost could be made.

An April 6, 1935 response from the architect indicates generally that they had designed the building according to the requirements given to them by the Public Belt Railroad and Highway Commissions. In the words of the architect, "we wanted to make it clear that the control of cost was not in our hands, but that the cost was determined by specific requirements given us". The architect further states that the suggestions for reducing the cost by Masters would not be enough to bring the building cost to the level desired. They did, however agree to "present for consideration of the two Commissions such a building as can be built for the money in hand", after a firm budget was agreed upon (See Field Record Item No. 5). A follow-up April 11, 1935 letter from Frank Master attempts to clarify certain elements of the building program.

Final Building Design – Existing Building

Revised Plans

Some time between mid-April of 1935 and May of 1935, the first plans for the Administration Building and support buildings were modified to suit the owner's budget. Original plans for the revised buildings are dated May 1935. Weiss, Dreyfous and Seiferth made major revisions in the size of the Administration Building, reducing its size from 4,032 square feet to 3,364 square feet. They also combined the three separate out buildings into one building, thus reducing the total square footage from 2,467 square feet for all three buildings to a single building of 1,830 square feet. It is this design that was eventually built and is being evaluated in this report.

The new plans for the Administration Building call for a smaller building with the same central Entrance Hall, two large Offices in the front, a smaller Office in the rear, a First Aid Room, two Toilet Rooms and a Switchboard Room. The architectural style, massing, symmetry and detailing of the building changed very little except for the size. The greatest change to the buildings exterior, outside of the reduction in size, was the change of the exterior skin finish material. Brick and selected cast stone trim was substituted instead of Indiana limestone for the exterior skin finish. All of the exterior door openings on the rear were deleted as well (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheets 1, 2, and 3 of 13).

Bidding

Having agreed upon a building design to fit with the budget, bids were received on August 29, 1935 by the Public Belt Railroad Commission. Six bidders submitted bids as follows (See Field Record Item No. 6):

Contractor	Base Bid	Alt. #1	Alt. #2	Alt. #3	Total Bid
R. P. Farnsworth & Company, Inc.	$38,894	$240	$100	$360	$39,594
Pittman Brothers Cons. Co.	$41,489	$264	$125	$425	$42,303
Perrilliat –Rickey Const. Co., Inc.	$41,643	$275	$ 95	$483	$42,496
Brockman & Walker, Inc.	$42,762	$250	$ 40	$500	$43,552
Lionel F. Favrot	$46,450	$270	$113	$412	$47,245
W. Horace Williams, Co. Inc.	$49,791	$500	$125	$450	$50,866

In an August 31, letter from Modjeski, Masters, & Chase, the engineers recommend to the Public Belt Railroad Commission the acceptance of the adjusted bid from R. P. Farnsworth in the amount of $39,594. The bid included the base bid and three alternates. The Base Bid for the construction of the Administration Building and the Garage Building was for $38,894. Alternate No. 1 included a substitution of natural Indiana limestone with cast stone. Alternate No. 2 included a substitution of cast aluminum for cast iron in the grill work over the doorways. Alternate No. 3 included changing of the entrance doorframes from steel to aluminum (See Field Record Item No. 14, pages 9 through 14).

During the course of the work three change orders were issued. The first change order was issued to increase the contract by $1,153.75 to furnish the necessary labor and materials for removing a large mound of dirt on the site and using it to fill and grade the site around the Administration Building. The second change order was to increase the contract amount by $10,837 for placing culverts around the front of the site; placing additional hydrants and drains; building concrete roadwork; building a west bank pump house building, and installing east bank and west bank hydrants and water system. The third change order was to increase the contract amount by $10,788 to include the furnishing and erection of the granite inscription marker and bronze tablets for the marker and the landscaping for the east and west bank traffic circles and the Administration Building.

Construction

It is not clear exactly when construction actually started on the Administration Building but from daily report records kept by the Resident Engineer of Construction, Mr. C. Glennon Melville, grading fill at the job site was being done on October 1, 1935. By November 8, 1935, the building concrete columns and roof concrete work had been poured. On November 14, 1935, the concrete had been poured for the garage building. By November 16, 1935, bricks were being laid on the building. By November 29, 1935, bricks were still being laid and steel window frames were being installed. By December 6, 1935, bricks and cast stone were being placed on the Administration Building. By December 10, 1935 the coping stone had been laid at the top of the exterior walls and the Switchboard Room had been plastered. By December 14, 1935, just two days before the bridge opening ceremonies, bricks were being laid on the garage and the interior walls of the Administration Building were being plastered. By January 7, 1935, windows were being glazed and ceramic tile was being installed in the main building (See Field Record Item No. 11).

In a December 19, 1935 memo from the architect, the entire finish schedule for the Administration Building is outlined (See Field Record Item No. 12). In a March 24, 1936 memo from the contractor, F.P. Farnsworth & Co., Inc. is delivering three master keys for the Administration Building and the Garage. This act by the contractor generally signals the completion of a job, so it is conjectured that sometime late in March of 1936, the Administration Building and the Garage were completed and ready for occupancy. The furnishings to be placed in the Administration Building were listed in a memo (See Field Record Item No. 13).

EXISTING BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The Administration Building was determined to be a contributing architectural element as part of the larger Huey P. Long Bridge project by the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, thus making it eligible for listing on the National Register. The Garage/Out-Building was determined as not eligible. Only the Administration Building and not the Garage/Out-Building is described in great detail in this report.

Exterior

The existing Administration Building has changed very little over 70 years. Specifically, the exterior of the building has not changed at all. The front (northeast) elevation consists of a central projected cast stone entry panel. The panel consists of a set of double screen and entry doors and a transom surrounded by curved and fluted stylized cast stone work. The door and transom unit is topped by a flat cast stone panel with the name of the building engraved into the cast stone in Art Deco style lettering which reads as follows:

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
LOUISIANA HIGHWAY
AND
PUBLIC BELT RAILROAD
COMMISSIONS

An architectural stylized relief band tops the central panel feature. Above the entry door is a stylized cast aluminum metal transom grille in the shape of the bridge superstructure. Flanking the central panel feature, on each side, are single panels of three windows each that defines the location of the two front interior offices (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 2 of 13) and (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-1, 5, and 6). The windows are set into a bas-relief in the brick that begins at the floor level, just above the cast stone belt course, and extends up to the cast stone parapet coping (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-6). Foundation vents are located below the two outside windows of each panel.

The building cornerstone is located on the right (north) corner of the front façade, just above the cast stone belt course which encircles the perimeter of the building (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-7). A marble plaque was dedicated and added to the left (south) corner of the front façade in 1985 marking the 50 year anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Huey P. Long Bridge (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-8).

The rear (southwest) elevation is equally symmetrical in design showing a series of seven regularly spaced windows, each set into a bas-relief in the brick that begins at the floor level, just above the cast stone belt course and extends up to the limestone parapet coping as well. Foundation vents are located below the three central window openings corresponding to the

location of the Switchboard Room (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-3). The northwest and southwest elevations consist of two equally spaced window panels with three windows each. The windows are set into a bas-relief in the brick that begins at the floor level, just above the cast stone belt course and extends up to the cast stone parapet coping. Foundation vents are located below the center window of each panel (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-2 and 4) and (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 2 of 13).

The building was constructed using an elevated reinforced concrete slab supported on reinforced concrete spread footings and perimeter reinforced concrete grade beams supported by piles. Two hexagonal interior spread footings were placed at the interior corners of the Switchboard Room to support the solid concrete walls. 14" square vertical reinforced concrete columns, resting on the footings, support the elevated reinforced concrete first floor and the reinforced concrete beam and flat slab roof system. The exterior perimeter walls are backed with a solid 8" brick wall and faced with brick. Cast stone is used for horizontal trim work at the windows and openings and as a belt course indicating the floor level. Interior walls are constructed of 3" hollow clay tile and faced with ¾" of plaster on each face (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 1 of 13) and (Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth, date unknown).

The exterior front double door unit consists of a pair of aluminum framed screen doors and a pair of hollow metal aluminum framed doors with glass inserts and stylized cast aluminum metal pulls. The entire unit set in the center of the cast stone entry panel includes the doors and an upper transom that is divided with a cast aluminum metal grille in the stylized shape of the bridge. The moldings around the entire unit are of extruded aluminum (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-5) and (Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth, date unknown). Windows are steel casement types opening out with hoppers (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-6) and (Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth, date unknown).

Interior

The interior finishes in the building were modified very little in the final design. The typical interior room finishes include a mixture of terrazzo, rubber tile, ceramic tile and concrete for the floors; plaster for most of the walls; a 6 foot ceramic tile wainscot in the First Aid Room; a 6 foot 10 inch marble wainscot in the Toilet Rooms and a wood chair rail and picture mold in the Entrance Hall and the two Offices. Interior doors are a mixture of two panel doors, with and without obscure glass, rotary cut solid wood doors with a veneer of red gum. The doors are set in pressed molded metal frames. The door into the Switchboard Room is a hollow metal steel door in a metal frame. (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheets 1 and 2 of 13) and (See Field Record Item No. 13) and (Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth, date unknown).

The Entrance Hall floors are made of terrazzo and are laid out in a divided rectangular pattern. The color ranges of the terrazzo are typical to the period, black and two varying shades of muted green. The original plaster walls with the wood chair rail remains as well. The 4" black marble floor base remains as well. All of the original metal framed, two panel wood doors with upper

obscured glass, accessing the offices, remain. The original door hardware is in place (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-12). Ceilings have been lowered by the use of suspended acoustical ceiling grids and tiles with recessed lighting (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-10) and (See Field Record Item No. 13) and (Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth, date unknown).

The two main offices flanking the Entrance Hall have been altered most severely. Paneling has been placed on the walls to cover the plaster in Office No. 2 (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-11). The original plaster ceiling has been covered with a suspended grid and acoustical tile ceiling system with recessed fluorescent lights. The original height of the ceiling has also been changed. The original rubber floor tile has been covered with a modern vinyl tile. The left front office, (Office No. 1), now occupied by the Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission's Causeway Police, has been subdivided into smaller offices.

Office No. 3, the small right rear room, is now being used as a small conference room. It has been altered little except for the installation of a new suspended ceiling. The two Toilet Rooms have been changed very little as well. Floors are laid in a pattern of 1" x 1" black, green and white ceramic tiles. The original toilets and toilet stalls are extant. Lavatories are the original ones and the original marble wall wainscot remains intact (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-13).

The Switchboard Room remains virtually intact. Its brick walls are exposed and the underside of the concrete roof deck is exposed also showing the imprint of the wood form boards for the concrete roof deck. Some of the original switching equipment is stored in the room that is now used as a general storage room and fireproof file room (Index to Photographs HAER No. LA-17-A-14 and 15).

Garage/Out-Building

Although not a National Register contributing element, the 1,830 square foot combined Garage/Paint Shop/Storage Room/Toilet-Locker Room Building is important to mention. It is a solid brick building with a low sloped flat roof. The building originally consisted of an open six car Garage in the middle, flanked by a Toilet/Locker Room and Storage Room on one end and a Paint Shop, Toilet Room and Heater Room on the other end. The building has been altered over the years. The garage portion has been enclosed and is now used as a meeting room. A large storage building was built adjacent to the original building and currently houses many of the functions originally housed in the smaller original building.

The Site

Situated in the southwest corner of the east bank traffic circle at Jefferson Highway, the Administration Building Site has changed very little since its construction. It includes paved driveways with entrances from the east bank approach ramp highway and the Jefferson Highway service road. The driveway encircles the building as originally designed. Paved parking exists in

front of the garage building as well. Much of the original landscaping around the building has been lost. There remains only a small cluster of red cedar trees on the south side of the building (Field Record Item No. 14) (See Original Drawings HAER No. LA-17-A, Sheet 3 of 13). Original specifications for landscaping of the traffic circles and the building grounds included Azaleas, Nandina Domestica and Quercus Virginiana (Live Oaks). Banana plants originally specified were changed to palms, dogwood, redwood and honeysuckle with occasional use of ground laurel. It is not clear what plants were used specifically around the building although.

Located just off the northern corner of the building, is the original building dedication bronze plaque mounted to a granite base that reflects the architectural style of the building. The plaque dedicates the project using the name "Mississippi River Crossing Bridge" and credits every politician and political entity connected with the project. The granite used for the marker is Ethel Georgia Granite. The inscription tablets are cast, hand-tooled, finished and polished bronze plaques.

REFERENCES

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